



**For immediate release  
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## **DCR CLOSES LONGFELLOW BRIDGE SIDEWALK**

*Bridge to be closed to spectators on the Fourth of July*

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) today closed the sidewalk on the west side of the Longfellow Bridge until further notice, after an inspection late Thursday night discovered a support beam in need of immediate repair. Pedestrians will be detoured to the opposite sidewalk, which remains open.

The inspection was conducted by DCR engineers after a consultant's report determined that load distributions on the sidewalks should continue to be evaluated. The DCR inspection revealed that the upstream sidewalk (the side carrying Cambridge-to-Boston vehicular traffic) needed to be closed to all pedestrians due to serious deterioration of a steel support structure under the sidewalk.

"Nothing is more important to this agency than public safety," said DCR Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr. "We have been conducting inspections and repairs on the Longfellow bridge nearly every day since last August, and the minute we see a problem, we take the action necessary to protect the public."

On April 30, the engineering firm of Simpson Gumpertz & Heger (SGH) began conducting load testing on the Longfellow Bridge sidewalks. The portions of the bridge tested, which did not include the segment where the deteriorated support beam was discovered last night, showed they were capable of supporting normal loads. But in a report DCR received this week, SGH suggested large crowds should not be allowed to gather on the sidewalks without further load testing. Specifically, SGH recommended that the sidewalks be closed for the Fourth of July celebration.

"Based on the SGH recommendation and today's decision on the sidewalk, DCR will close the entire Longfellow Bridge to spectators on July 4," Sullivan said. "We recognize this is an enormously popular local, and even national, event, but our top priority is ensuring public safety."

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Under the Patrick administration, DCR has spent more than \$1 million on inspections and \$4.5 million on repairs to the bridge since August 2007. More than 200 jack beams have been replaced, and more than 180 railing brackets have been repaired.

The agency estimates that 60 percent of the anticipated repairs have been completed, with full completion expected this fall. A final bridge load rating will be conducted as soon as all the repairs have been completed.

Governor Deval Patrick has directed DCR to advance the start date for full rehabilitation of the Longfellow Bridge from 2020 to 2010, under his proposed \$3 billion Accelerated Structurally Deficient Bridge Improvement Program now before the Legislature.

Traditionally, the Longfellow Bridge has been closed to vehicular traffic on July 4, and thousands of spectators gather on the bridge to watch the fireworks and festivities at the Hatch Shell and along the Esplanade.

“We respect and fully support DCR’s decision to ensure public safety on the Longfellow Bridge,” said Rich MacDonald of Boston 4 Productions, the organization that stages the Boston Pops fireworks spectacular on July 4<sup>th</sup>. “We encourage the public to utilize the many other viewing areas for fireworks along the Charles River in both Cambridge and Boston.”

In the coming weeks, DCR will work with event organizers and other state agencies to develop a management plan for the July 4 closure. The agency will communicate all of the details to the public ahead of time.

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*The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, and dams, in addition to 278 bridges and miles of roadways. Led by Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr., the agency’s mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about DCR, our facilities, and our programs, please visit [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr). Contact us at [mass.parks@state.ma.us](mailto:mass.parks@state.ma.us).*